Rags to Riches

kidbrothers.net/release/fal93art.html

If you've ever owned a Rich Mullins album or been to one of his concerts, you've undoubtedly already been introduced to Beaker. For the past five years the two "Kid Brother's of St. Frank" (as they call their merry band) have been roommates, songwriting partners, traveling comrades, fellow-students, and friends.
Who better than to talk about the rich new collection of songs and stories that make up Mr. Mullins' latest tour de force known as A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band - and give a little insight into the mind that put the words and music together

"So, what's he like? No, I mean what's he really like?"

You wouldn't believe how many times I've been asked this question. And what are my options for possible responses? How do you answer a question like that? It's like trying to tell someone what a sunset looks like out in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas. Or describing the way an affectionate dog's tongue feels when you find it unexpectedly on your face. Or it would be like answering someone if they asked you to describe a painting by Monet. There are so many ways that people are the same and yet the ways that they are unique are as numerous as the constellations. And I'm not quite sure which it is that makes a person a person - the similarities or the differences.

Rich Mullins is my friend - this much I can tell you. A large part of me wants to leave it at that. To be able to say to you that he is my friend and **that** is what he is really like. No more, no less. I could let you fill in all the blanks. Because, don't we all, in some sense, see people more as we want to see them than as they really are? I love it when C.S. Lewis says:

> *"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." (The Weight of Glory)*

So, does that tell you anything of what I think Rich is really like? Do you see that even after living with him for the last five years he seems to me just like Cheryl, who is our travel agent, or Richard, who delivers the mail, or Israel, a little boy who lives in the Philippines, or this guy named Brian who is in my American Studies class? Can you see that I believe none of us are "mere mortals" and that it is quite possible that every human being is a miracle - no more and no less amazing than the person we think the least of or the person we think nothing of at all?

How's that for an introduction to Rich? There's always hope that I'll get with it before my space runs out and dive into the real Rich Mullins. I guess I could tell you a few things, but you must remember that I am biased, opinionated, and limit in my perspective. It will be magnanimously difficult to maintain any kind of objectivity and you must promise to keep that and all of what I write in some sort of perspective.

With that out of the way, let me tell you couple of secrets. Are you ready? Rich loses things. It's not a big secret to those around him, but you might not have known it. He loses stuff all the time. Sometimes it drives him crazy. Sometimes it drives everyone else crazy; especially when it's the last set of keys to the car that's supposed to take us to a concert that is two hours away and starts in forty-five minutes. But most of the time, we all laugh. Rich loses something and then we laugh. He laughs and we laugh. It's such a bizarre reaction, but I've figured out why. It is because each has discovered that he doesn't have to take himself too seriously. It would be pretty easy for him to believe that the world, his world, revolves around him. It would not take much for him to think that he knows everything. I can tell you, since we have spent the last five years working, traveling and writing together, he does know just about everything - with a few critical exceptions - on being, the location of the ever important and ever disappearing car keys. Since I've got you going, how about another secret?

We never know when it's going to hit him. You can't predict it. You can't see it. You can't really feel it, but once it strikes, you have no doubt that it's there. So, do you want to know what IT is? I ought not to tell you - but I am not much different than most people I know - I struggle so much with doing what I ought to do and with not doing what I should. Oh well, I've started into it, I might as well tell you now. The secret is that Rich gets obsessed. You're never quite sure what he is going to get obsessed with, but once he is there is almost no going back. It could be an obsession with a movie (we saw Dances With Wolves thirteen times in its first three weeks in the theater). It could be with drawing plans for a cabin (he's been working on some since I've know him). Or it could be with trying to finish a song. I guess he's not alone. We have an ongoing abuse of one another over who gets obsessed more. Sometimes it just hits you: like you go through days and days without thinking about your fingernails - then, with no warning, you realize they need to be

trimmed. Suddenly everything revolves around trying to find clippers - it feels like life will not be right until the obsession is eased. Now, you might think that nail clipping or movie going or architectural designs are merely trivialities. That Rich, or I should be obsessed, you may think, is dangerous - almost sinful. I think that we sometimes fail to see the strength and the weaknesses of things. If I had called it "having an incredible capacity for perseverance," or even "having a desire to never give up or quit" maybe it would not have sounded as revolting. There are dangers - the object of our obsession may be unhealthy, hurtful or even unholy. But the flip-side is just as good as the bad is bad. There can be a determination to love, and obsessions with living in peace, and an intense desire to live in grace.

Well, that's about all there is to that secret - you want another? Nope, I can't do it. You'll have to take what I gave you ... but, if you'd like to know what Rich has been working on, then keep on reading.

Sometime in October when the leaves demand you attention and the air smells crisp, when the excitement of a new school year has turned to drudgery and wool sweaters are pulled from moth protected trunks to replace tank-tops, Reunion Records will release A Liturgy, A Legacy and A Ragamuffin Band. You should buy it (sorry, I told you I was biased). Anyway, the idea of Rich's newest project was to gather a bunch of friends together, lock them in a studio and create an album about life, and God and worship. He wanted to come up with a recording that was a collaboration of the talents, the musical and personal quirks, the insights, and the feelings of the whole group; this group became the Ragamuffin Band. The idea grew into reality somewhere near Anderson, Indiana, sometime around March 1993. People from Kansas, people from Texas and people from Tennessee spent a couple of weeks putting together and album that represents fairly well who Rich Mullins really is. In fact, this article wanes in comparison. But come to think of it, it would probably be far better for you to find out from A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band, maybe even from this article, who God is and what He's like, rather than gaining insight into the life and personality of some Christian musician. And, you know what? Rich would prefer it that way. **That's** what he's really like.

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